

Message Text

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ACTION L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6635

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, MA (REPPAS, GEORGE)

SUBJECT: APPROACH TO MALAGASY HEAD OF GOVT ON REPPAS CASE

REF: STATE 208152

BEGIN SUMMARY: DEMARCHE MADE TO MALAGASY HEAD GOVT
GENERAL RAMANANTSOA ABOUT RELEASING REPPAS ON
HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, WITH VOLUNTARY PAROLE IN US
IF THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO GOMR. RAMANANTSOA SAID
REQUEST WOULD BE STUDIED, BUT HE COULD MAKE NO
PROMISES. END SUMMARY.

1. I MADE DEMARCHE AND PRESENTED AIDE-MEMOIRE ON
REPPAS, AS INSTRUCTED REFTTEL, TO GENERAL RAMANANTSOA
ON OCT 16. ALSO PRESENTED MRS. REPPAS' LETTER
FORWARDED BY DEPT AND COPY OF LETTER TO REPPAS FROM
HIS AMERICAN DOCTOR ON PROSTATE CONDITION. PREFACED
APPROACH BY NOTING THIS WAS SAME SUBJECT GENERAL HAD
RAISED WITH ME DURING MY FIRST CALL ON HIM ALMOST
TWO YEARS AGO.

2. IN RESPONSE TO APPROACH, GENERAL SAID HE WOULD STUDY
AIDE-MEMOIRE AND OTHER DOCUMENTS. REFERRING TO REPPAS'
APPEAL TO SUPREME COURT, HE SAID NOTHING COULD BE DONE
UNTIL IT IS SEEN HOW THAT DECISION COMES OUT. (SINCE
GENERAL HAD KNOWN FOR OVER WEEK SUBJECT I WAS RAISING,
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THIS WAS OBVIOUSLY HIS PREPARED ANSWER TO ANTICIPATED

DEMARCHE.)

3. I SAID THAT I UNDERSTOOD APPEAL COULD BE WITHDRAWN IF ANOTHER SOLUTION WERE FOUND. GENERAL STATED HE WOULD CONSIDER MATTER WITH THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE (I BELIEVE IT HAD THEN STRUCK THE GENERAL THAT PROPOSAL FOR RELEASE ON VOLUNTARY PAROLE WAS NEW IDEA ON WHICH HE HAD NOT BEEN BRIEFED, AND THAT HE WILL PROBABLY WANT IT STUDIED BY MINISTRY OF JUSTICE.)

4. GENERAL MENTIONED HE HAD ALSO RECEIVED APPEAL FROM REPPAS' MOTHER. I COMMENTED FROM HUMANITARIAN SIDE, MOTHER'S SITUATION PROBABLY MOST DIFFICULT OF ALL ASPECTS IN REPPAS CASE SINCE SHE WORRIED ABOUT NEVER SEEING SON AGAIN. AT THIS POINT GENERAL INTERJECTED THAT REPPAS' CONDUCT HAD BEEN SCANDALOUS, AND THAT IN FACT MALAGASY JUSTICE WAS "TOO GENEROUS." I OBVIOUSLY REFRAINED FROM COMMENT ON THESE POINTS SINCE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. GENERAL DID EXPRESS REGRET THAT REPPAS CASE HAD EVER ARISEN.

5. IN CONCLUSION, GENERAL REITERATED OUR PROPOSALS WOULD BE STUDIED, BUT SAID HE COULD PROMISE NOTHING.

6. COMMENTS:

(A) GENERAL WAS CORDIAL DURING MEETING AND INQUIRED AFTER HEALTH OF MRS. FORD. HOWEVER, I AM DUBIOUS THAT HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS IN REPPAS CASE PRODUCED MUCH EFFECT IN VIEW ENORMITY OF OFFENSE WHICH GENERAL (LIKE ALL OTHER MALAGASY) CONSIDER REPPAS TO HAVE COMMITTED. POSSIBLY VOLUNTARY PAROLE MAY PROVE KEY WHICH WILL SATISFY MALAGASY JUSTICE AND POLITICAL REQUIREMENTS. I SUSPECT ANSWER TO OUR APPROACH MAY COME THROUGH THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE SINCE GENERAL REFERRED TO HIM SEVERAL TIMES DURING TALK.

(B) IF THIS APPROACH DOES NOT YIELD RESULTS SOUGHT, ALTERNATIVE APPEARS BE AWAIT OUTCOME OF APPEAL TO SUPREME COURT AND THEN DECIDE IN LIGHT OF DECISION WHAT FURTHER ACTION MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE. DEPT WILL RECALL REPPAS' LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LAWYER LEBEL DOES NOT EXPECT COURT DECISION BEFORE DECEMBER AT EARLIEST. IF THERE ARE NO RESULTS FROM APPROACH TO GENERAL RAMANANTSOA, EMBASSY COULD PERHAPS PICK UP LEBEL SUGGESTION OF "VISITE DE RENSEIGNEMENT" TO PRESIDENT SUPREME COURT (WHO WELL KNOWN TO EMBASSY) IN ORDER ATTEMPT INDIRECTLY TO ACCELERATE DECISION. MENDENHALL

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